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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: SENV ENRG KGHG CS
SUBJECT: CENTRAL AMERICANS RENEW "CONCAUSA III" PUSH FOR CLIMATE COOPERATION WITH U.S.

REF: A. SAN JOSE 0146 B. SAN JOSE 0147

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST: Central American environment ministers continue to seek greater U.S. cooperation with the region on climate change through a revival of the Central American-United States Joint Declaration ("CONCAUSA") process launched in 1994. As Costa Rica serves as President Pro Tem of the Central American Integration System ("SICA"), Costa Rican Foreign Minister Bruno Stagno Ugarte sent an August 4 letter to Secretary Clinton requesting USG consideration of signing a "CONCAUSA III" on climate change and energy at the UN climate change negotiations in December at Copenhagen. With Central American environment ministers stepping up their efforts to promote this idea, Post requests Washington's guidance for a response. Below in para 7 is an unofficial translation of ForMin Stagno's letter. END SUMMARY.

Centrals Renew Call for "CONCAUSA III"

¶2. (SBU) On July 27, Central American ministers of environment gathered in Costa Rica to meet as the Central American Commission for Environment and Development ("CCAD" Q Comision Centroamericano de Ambiente y Desarrollo). At their concluding dinner meeting, Costa Rican Minister Jorge Rodriguez and Guatemalan Environment Minister Luis Ferrate told Regional Environmental Officer (REO) that ministers had agreed to renew their appeal for greater U.S. cooperation with the region on climate change by reviving the "CONCAUSA" process launched originally at the 1994 Summit of the Americas in Miami. Other CCAD members in attendance included the new Environment Minister of Belize, the new Vice Minister of Environment of El Salvador, the new head of Panama's National Environmental Authority, and assorted staff from the various ministries and the CCAD Secretariat.

¶3. (SBU) Ministers Rodriguez and Ferrate were the most vocal proponents of the "CONCAUSA III" idea. Rodriguez said that other Central American environment ministers had agreed to prod their foreign ministry counterparts to send letters to Secretary Clinton along the lines of that later signed by Costa Rican Foreign Minister Stagno. Rodriguez and Ferrate stressed the region's hope that the USG would agree to a "CONCAUSA III" initiative prior to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP) in December at Copenhagen.

¶4. (SBU) The Central Americans say they want to position the region as a "green market" where U.S. firms might buy carbon credits in forested lands, should that possibility be opened up by the UNFCCC negotiations. Rodriguez and Ferrate also said they hoped that the

U.S. House of Representatives' recent approval of the Waxman-Markey bill might augur well for a future carbon credits market, as well as for stronger U.S. engagement on climate change adaptation in the region. REO cautioned Rodriguez and Ferrate about the obstacles to reviving CONCAUSA between now and the Copenhagen meeting. REO also reminded them of the openings for collaboration offered by President Obama's April 2009 announcement of the "Energy & Climate Partnership of the Americas" (ECPA). REO further reminded them of potential partnership opportunities offered through other USG efforts in the region, such as CAFTA-DR environmental capacity building and Pathways to Prosperity.

Comment and Action Request

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: Although the Central Americans appear interested in pursuing cooperation under ECPA, they nonetheless remain focused more on pushing for a "CONCAUSA III" effort specifically for Central America and also possibly including the Caribbean. The region's environment ministers are stepping up their lobbying effort and they have begun prodding their foreign ministry counterparts to elevate this issue on the region's agenda with the U.S. With Costa Rica currently chairing the SICA process and hosting a Pathways to Prosperity ministerial in December, these efforts may well intensify. In the meantime, the Central Americans remain anxious for a USG reply. As reported previously (refs A and B), more focused USG engagement on climate change in the region could help to counter growing European efforts to shape Latin American and Caribbean views in the run-up to Copenhagen. END COMMENT.

¶6. (U) ACTION REQUEST: Post requests Washington's consideration of the "CONCAUSA III" proposal and guidance in responding to further inquiries.

¶7. (U) Below is an unofficial translation of Foreign Minister Stagno's letter to Secretary Clinton, which Post received on August 11.

BEGIN TEXT OF STAGNO LETTER TO SECRETARY CLINTON

NON-OFFICIAL TRANSLATION
The Ministry of Foreign Relations

San Jose, August 4, 2009

The Honorable
Hillary Clinton
Secretary of State
United States of America
Washington, D.C.

Honorable Ms. Clinton:

In my condition as President Pro Tem of the Central American Integration System, (known by its Spanish acronyms "SICA"), I take advantage of this opportunity to manifest the interest of the member countries of this intergovernmental organization to start a process of updating the Central America & United States Joint Declaration ("CONCAUSA"). This Declaration, which was first signed at the Summit of the Americas held in Miami in 1994 and later modified on February 2002 during the Administration of the President George W. Bush, is the instrument that establishes the United States of America as the first non-regional member of the Central American Alliance for Sustainable Development (ALIDES).

Taking into account the renewed interest of President Barack Obama's Administration on topics such as climate change and renewable energy, as well as the advance in the approval of a specific law in the House of Representatives of your country, we consider it convenient for both parties to advance a process of defining themes and commitments of common interest in the areas of climate change and energy; commitments that we could sign in the XV Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to be held next December in Copenhagen, Denmark.

Trusting that this Central American initiative will be received with interest by the United States of America, and that we can join

efforts in this common but differentiated responsibility to face the challenges of mitigation and adaptation to climate change; please accept the assurances of my highest consideration and esteem.

/S/
Bruno Stagno Ugarte

END TEXT OF STAGNO LETTER TO SECRETARY CLINTON

BRENNAN